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VAMPIRE GAME
JUDAL
9
TOKYOPOP

VAMPIRE GAME

Volume 9

by

JUDAL

TOKYOPOP

HAMBURG // LONDON // LOS ANGELES // TOKYO

VAMPIRE GAME

The Story Thus Far...

This is the tale of the Vampire King Duzell and his quest for revenge against the good King Phelios, a valiant warrior who slew the vampire a century ago. Now Duzell has returned, reincarnated as a feline foe to deliver woe to... well, that's the problem. Who is the reincarnation of King Phelios?

For the people of Zi Alda, Prince Yuujel has been missing in action for several years. What they don't know is that he's been alive and well, teaching magic to Princess Ishtar and calling himself Yujinn. The princess, Duzell and Darres are all in the dark as well. So, when Yujinn arrives in Zi Alda and reveals that he's been living a dual life, it's understandable that some people might be a little upset. However, one of those people is the not-so-lovely Lady Leene, and as anyone who values their existence could tell you, you really don't want to make Leene mad.

Ishtar didn't come to Zi Alda looking for trouble, but trouble has a way of catching up with our beloved princess. With Leene mistakenly believing that her beloved Yuujel has fallen in love with Ishtar, trouble has not only caught up with Ishtar, it's wrestled her to the ground and given her a mean set of noogies. Possessing a triptych of poisonous pills, each destructive in its own way, Leene has the ways and means to do away with Ishtar...permanently.

However, as we all know, Ishtar doesn't love Yujinn, she loves Darres. And in a fit of perfect irony, it's been revealed that Yujinn loves Darres as well. Duzell, meanwhile, has been busy contending with a former lover of his own—the Vampire Countess Diaage. And where does Vord fit into this show of amorous antics? You got us.

吸血遊戯
青領無
Act.10

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SO, LEENE...
...WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO CALL HIM?
I THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALL NIGHT, AND I'M GOING TO NAME HIM PUCENTRO.
What the...?
PURE... ERR...POO... I MEAN...
NO! PUCENTRO!

SO, ARE YOU READY FOR A RIDE, POO... UM...POOKY?
Hmph!
HIS NAME IS PUCENTRO! SAY IT! PU-CEN-TRO!
Heh. heh. heh...

PUCENTRO WAS THE EVER-FAITHFUL MOUNT OF THE GODDESS SORARIARAM! IT'S PERFECT!
UH, WELL
THAT'S A GREAT NAME!
DON'T YOU THINK SO, GUYS?
Yes!
Absolutely!
It's damn near angelic!

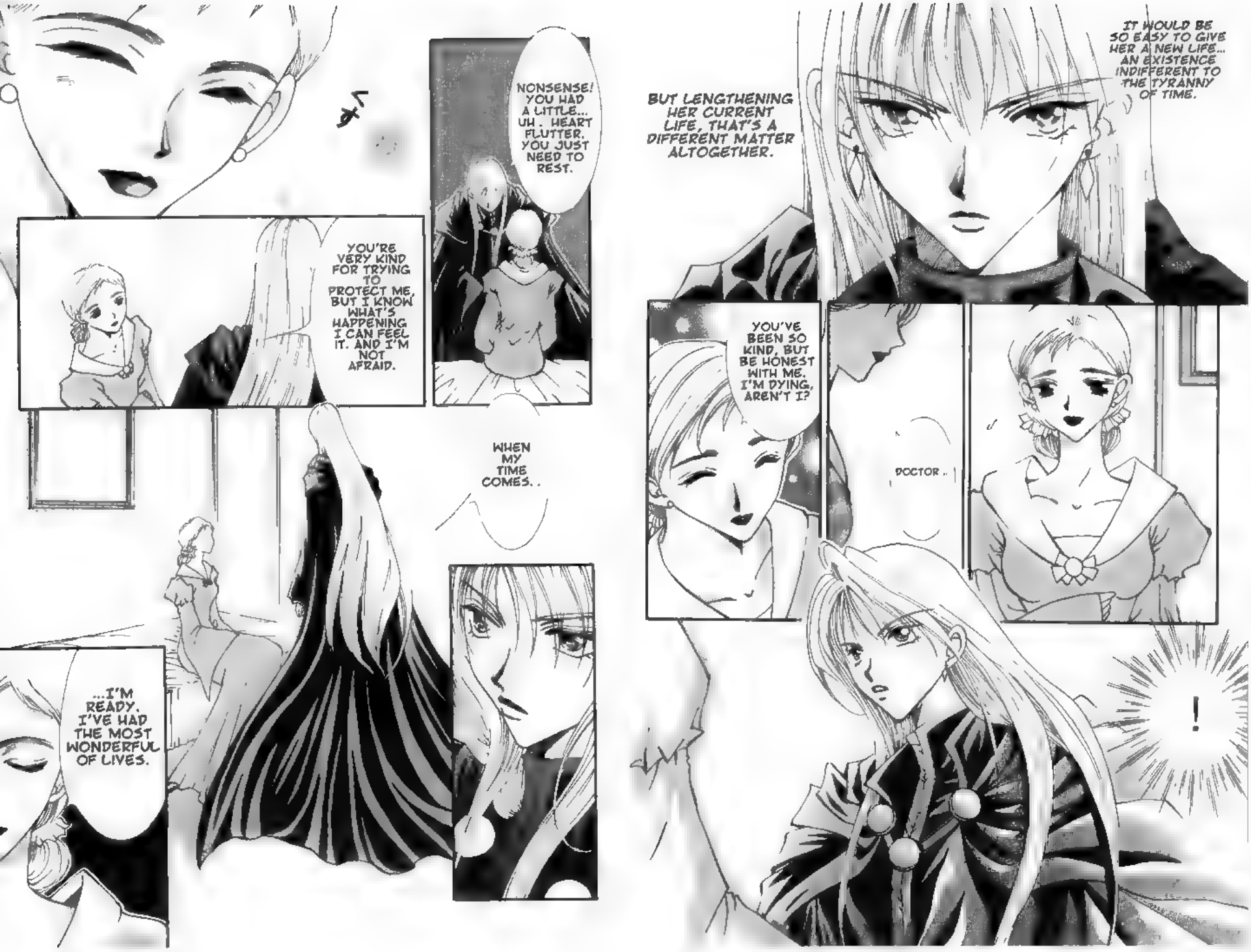
WE PASSED THAT POINT DAYS AGO.
OH YES, THE "KILLER HORSE."
YOU COULD HAVE STOPPED IT, YOU KNOW. PERSONALLY, I THINK YOU LIKED WATCHING ISHTAR SWEAT.

I CAN'T QUITE PUT MY FINGER ON IT...
...BUT...
...LEENE'S UP TO SOMETHING. AND IF WE DON'T STOP HER, WE COULD BE LOOKING AT A POLITICAL DISASTER.
THIS ISN'T A LAUGHING MATTER.
OR AT THE VERY LEAST, A REALLY CRANKY PRINCESS.
RELAX. LEENE'S ALWAYS UP TO SOMETHING. LET HER HAVE HER FUN. WE'LL STEP IN IF IT GETS DANGEROUS.

I'M SORRY YOU SUFFERED FOR ME.
LEENE DID TOO, IN A WAY.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
BUT I MADE SURE ASHLEY GOT WHAT HE WANTED. AT YOUR EXPENSE.
AT BOTH OF YOUR EXPENSES.
I KNEW HOW EVERYBODY FELT.
JUST THAT, OUT OF ALL THE MEN I'VE KNOWN--- EVEN THE ONES I'VE LOVED-- ASHLEY WAS THE ONLY ONE I COULD CALL A FRIEND.
. . . . . .

THIS IS DIFFERENT.
LEENE HAS NEVER PLAYED WELL WITH OTHERS. SHE'S BEEN THAT WAY SINCE WE WERE KIDS.
QUIT ACTING SURPRISED. I KNOW HOW YOU FELT ABOUT ASHLEY. HOW YOU STILL FEEL ABOUT HIM.
I SUPPOSE...
...BUT IF I LET YOUR JEALOUSY COLOR MY JUDGMENT, WE COULD END UP WITH A SCANDAL OUR GRANDCHILDREN WILL BE TALKING ABOUT.
!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO ME.
AGAIN, I'M SORRY.
IN THE END, WE BOTH PAID THE SAME PRICE.


IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO GIVE HER A NEW LIFE... AN EXISTENCE INDIFFERENT TO THE TYRANNY OF TIME.
BUT LENGTHENING HER CURRENT LIFE, THAT'S A DIFFERENT MATTER ALTOGETHER.
YOU'VE BEEN SO KIND, BUT BE HONEST WITH ME. I'M DYING, AREN'T I?
DOCTOR..
!
NONSENSE! YOU HAD A LITTLE... UH. HEART FLUTTER. YOU JUST NEED TO REST.
YOU'RE VERY KIND FOR TRYING TO PROTECT ME, BUT I KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING. I CAN FEEL IT. AND I'M NOT AFRAID.
WHEN MY TIME COMES..
...I'M READY. I'VE HAD THE MOST WONDERFUL OF LIVES.

...I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING MY HUSBAND AGAIN. I HAD A DREAM ABOUT HIM. HE WAS WAITING FOR ME.
THAT'S THE MOST SELFISH THING I'VE EVER HEARD!
ISHTAR LOVES YOU! SHE NEEDS YOU TO LIVE!
YOU MIGHT NOT CARE IF YOU LIVE OR DIE, BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE THAT STILL NEED YOU!
WITH THE SUPPORT OF MY FRIENDS, I MARRIED MY TRUE LOVE...
I HAVE NO REGRETS. AND WHILE I'LL MISS...
EVERYONE
I WAS EVEN BLESSED WITH A CHILD.
A DESCENDANT OF SAINT PHELIOS.
...IN SPITE OF A ROYAL DECREE DEMANDING THAT I MARRY...

LOVE?
HE TOLD ME...
...FINALLY CAME TO SEE ME LAST NIGHT.
MY SON...
ISHTAR?
DOCTOR...
...I BELIEVE YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE FLUTTERING HEART. IT'S A COMMON SIDE EFFECT OF BEING IN LOVE.
YOU'D DO ANYTHING FOR...
AND I'D DO ANYTHING FOR HER!
ANYTHING!

AFTER ALL, I DON'T WANT TO LOOK SUSPICIOUS.
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WAAAAAAH!
OH, CRAP!
LEENE!
!!
...THAT HE'S IN LOVE WITH THE PRINCESS AS WELL.

PARALYZING YOUR HORSE WON'T DO A BLOODY THING FOR ME.

WHOA, BOY! EASY...
I'M SORRY, MILADY!
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S STILL GOT A WILD STREAK IN HIM.

.....
YEEEE-HAAAW!
HE JUST GOT A LITTLE SPOOKED, IS ALL...
PUCENTRO IS MY HORSE. AND I WILL RIDE HIM.
WHAT PART OF "WHOA" DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND?!
SLOW DOWN! WHOA! WHOA!

NOOO!
MAYBE YOU COULD RIDE MY HORSE TODAY?
LET ME WORK HIM A LITTLE MORE.
I'LL HAVE HIM PRANCING LIKE A SHOW PONY IN NO TIME.

!
ALMOST GOT IT
MAYBE NOT!
ACK!
YEAH... J-JUST A LITTLE... SPOOKED... THAT'S ALL...
Oh, my liver..

HEY! LOOK AT THAT!
HE LET ME GET ON!
WHAT A GOOD PUCENTRO!
AND NEXT WEEK, WE'LL CANTER, THEN GALLOP...
MAYBE TOMORROW HE'LL EVEN LET ME RIDE HIM!
...AND IN A MONTH OR SO, WE'LL RIDE CLEAR ACROSS ZI ALDA!
WOW, LEENE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
IF YOU ASKED ME, I'D HAVE THOUGHT THE HORSE WOULD BE RIDING YOU BY NOW!
LADY LEENE? ARE YOU OKAY? I THINK HER MOUTH HAS SWOLLEN SHUT.
I CAN SEE WHY LEENE CAUSES SO MUCH TROUBLE. WHEN SHE PUTS HER MIND TO SOMETHING...
...THERE'S NO STOPPING HER. KIND OF LIKE ANOTHER PAIN-IN-THE-ASS I KNOW.

IF YOU TAKE THIS HORSE, YOU HAVE TO PROMISE ME...
...YOU'LL TAKE THE BEST CARE OF HIM.
I GAVE MY WORD THAT HE WOULD BE TREATED WELL.
FINE, SO THE HORSE IS HAPPY.
THAT MAKES ONE OF US, AT LEAST.
YOU THINK SO?
I'M SURE THAT THE, UH, POO-MAN HERE WILL SERVE YOU VERY WELL.
I'M GLAD YOU TWO MADE FRIENDS.
BUT NOW THAT I SEE HOW MUCH YOU LOVE HIM, I KNOW THAT HORSE WILL BE SPOILED ROTTEN.
...SIR ASHLEY HAD GIVEN HIM TO YOU, I THOUGHT HE'D FORGOTTEN OUR BARGAIN.
WHEN I FOUND OUT...
WATER!
CAPTAIN! THE CISTERN IS FULL!
WHAT DID ASHLEY SAY?
LOVE...

AND SHOULD MY PUCENTRO SUFFER...
...JUST SO ISHTAR WILL SUFFER TOO?

IT'S TEMPTING...
Can't say I blame him. If I found myself in between Leena's legs, I'd be pretty freaked too!
That's what she said
So, Lady Leena claims the horse was going crazy because it was frightened?

NOW...
WHAT WAS IT THAT DI'AAGE SA'D?
!?
"THE SEEDS OF MISERY ARE EASILY SOWN, BUT WHAT'S DONE CAN'T BE UNDONE..."

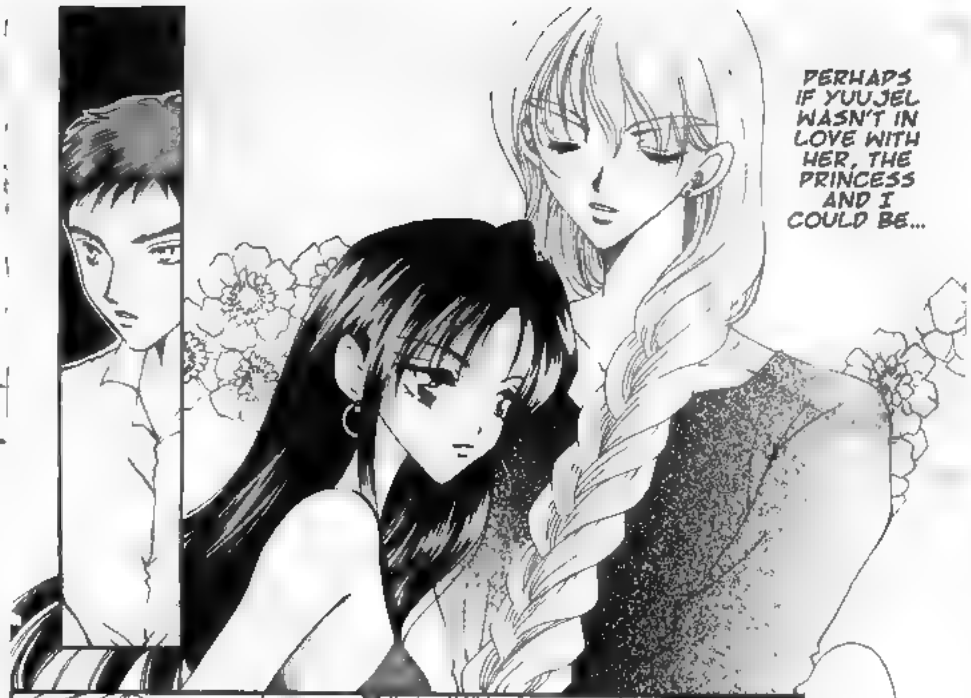
吸血遊戯
南領篇（ゼ・アルゲ）
Act.11

.....
LEENE..
HEE, HEE, HEE! ♡
...OF YOUR RIDING PART-NER...
WHAT DO YOU THINK..
...PRINCESS ISHTAR?
SO HE KICKED OUT MY KNEECAPS! ISN'T THAT JUST THE CUTEST?!
AND THEN...
...EVEN AFTER I HAD WASHED AND RUBBED HIM DOWN, PUCENTRO STILL DIDN'T WANT ME TO LEAVE!
I THINK...
...I'LL TAKE HIM SOME CAR-ROTS AFTER DINNER JUST SO HE KNOWS I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ABOUT HIM.

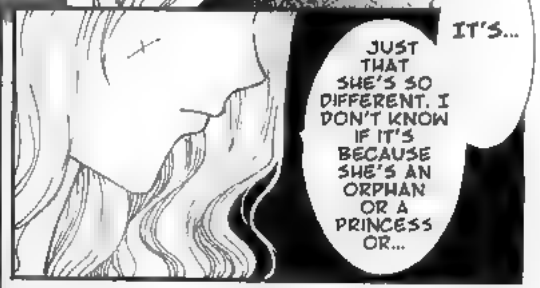
.....
THOSE ARE SOME PRETTY HARSH WORDS.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU DON'T THINK MUCH OF HER.
WELL, SHE'S NOT WITHOUT HER CHARMS.
SHE HAS NO GRACE WHATSOEVER! NOT TO MENTION SHE'S FLAT AS A WASHBOARD..
AND SHE'S SO FORWARD!
THE ONLY THING RESERVED ABOUT OUR PRINCESS IS HER SEAT ON THE PHELIOSTAN THRONE!
I COULDN'T POISON MY PUCENTRO, BUT WHY DID I FREAK OUT AND THROW AWAY THE BLUE PILL? I'M SURE I COULD HAVE FOUND SOMEONE ELSE TO USE IT ON!
I THINK SHE'S NOWHERE NEAR MISERABLE ENOUGH FOR MY TASTES. THAT'S WHAT I THINK!
WHAT DO I THINK OF ISHTAR?
THAT WAS STUPID. DIAAGE WOULD PROBABLY TURN ME INTO A TOAD IF SHE FOUND OUT ABOUT THAT. I REALLY NEED TO REIN IN MY TEMPER.
TRUST ME...
SHE MAY CALL HERSELF A PRINCESS, BUT THERE'S NOTHING LADYLIKE ABOUT HER.
REALLY? YOU THINK SHE'S A TOMBOY?
SHE'S KIND OF MASCULINE.

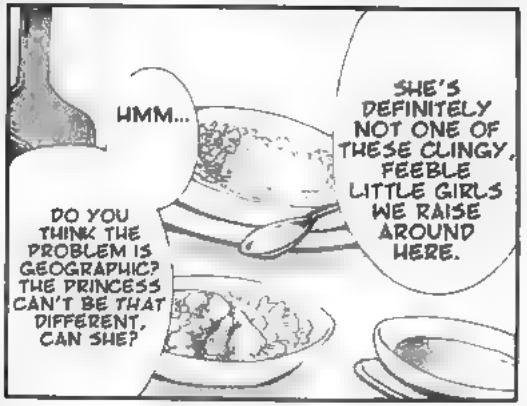
OTHER PEOPLE MAY NOT LIKE YOU.
YOU MAY NOT LIKE YOURSELF.
BUT I LOVE YOU.
I ALWAYS HAVE. I ALWAYS WILL.

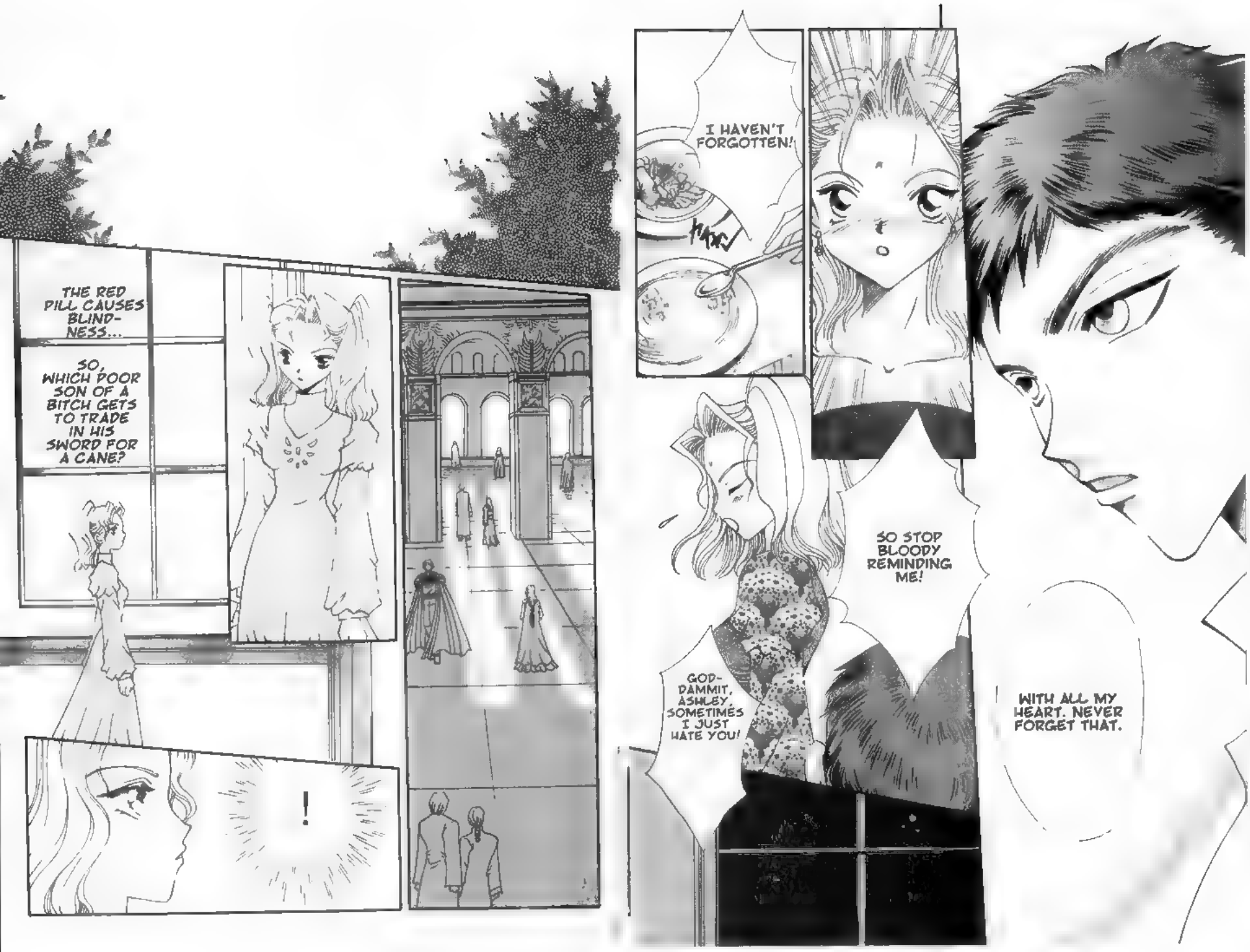
LEENE...

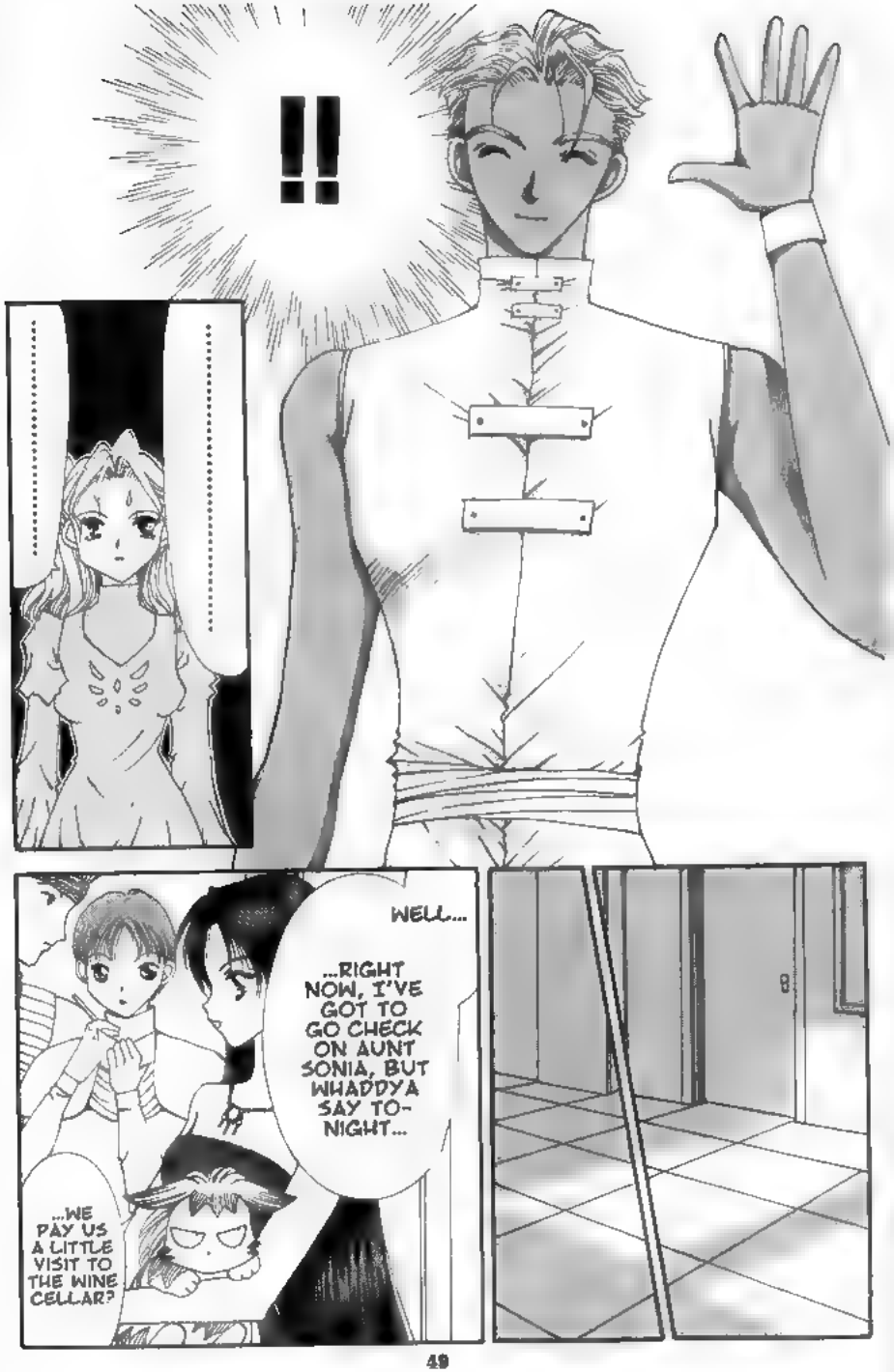

PERHAPS IF YUUJEL WASN'T IN LOVE WITH HER, THE PRINCESS AND I COULD BE...

I SUPPOSE NOT, DEAR HUSBAND. SHE'S JUST LIKE ANY OTHER WOMAN--ABSOLUTELY PATHETIC.
I GUESS THE PRINCESS AND I HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON AFTER ALL.


IT'S...
JUST THAT SHE'S SO DIFFERENT. I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S AN ORPHAN OR A PRINCESS OR...


HMM...
DO YOU THINK THE PROBLEM IS GEOGRAPHIC? THE PRINCESS CAN'T BE THAT DIFFERENT, CAN SHE?
SHE'S DEFINITELY NOT ONE OF THESE CLINGY, FEEBLE LITTLE GIRLS WE RAISE AROUND HERE.


THE RED PILL CAUSES BLIND-NESS...
SO, WHICH POOR SON OF A BITCH GETS TO TRADE IN HIS SWORD FOR A CANE?
!
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN!
SO STOP BLOODY REMINDING ME!
GOD-DAMMIT, ASHLEY. SOMETIMES I JUST HATE YOU!
WITH ALL MY HEART. NEVER FORGET THAT.


!!
WELL...
...RIGHT NOW, I'VE GOT TO GO CHECK ON AUNT SONIA, BUT WHADDYA SAY TO-NIGHT...
...WE PAY US A LITTLE VISIT TO THE WINE CELLAR?

I KNOW! WHAT ABOUT ISHTAR'S PET WILDCAT?
SHE LOVES THAT MANGY LITTLE FLEABAG!
I WISH DIAAGE WAS HERE. SHE'D KNOW WHAT TO DO.
HMM... MAYBE IF I JUST CHOSE SOMEONE REALLY UGLY AND ANNOYING. .

HMM... THAT'S PRETTY ASTUTE.
...AND SHE'D TAKE BETTER CARE OF HIM. THAT'S ALL.
...THEN HE'D SEEM MORE LIKE HER HORSE...
I JUST THOUGHT THAT IF SHE CAME UP WITH HER OWN NAME...
I'd say it's the princess who just exploded! Yeesh.
THAT'S IT?! YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE DAMN HORSE?!!
WHY DID YOU MAKE HER NAME HIM? I CAN'T FIGURE THAT OUT.
IT'S ABOUT POO... UH, LADY LEENE'S HORSE.
I'LL, UH, STAND BACK HERE, AND YOU GO RIGHT ON AHEAD AND ASK ME, 'KAY?
NO TAKERS? WHAT? IS IT SUNDAY OR SOMETHING?
UH? EWW!
IF I DON'T ASK YOU NOW, I THINK I'M GOING TO EXPLODE.
I WAS WAITING FOR THE RIGHT TIME, BUT I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER. I BARELY SLEPT LAST NIGHT
LADY ISHTAR, I NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.

YOO HOO! YOUR MAJESTY!
IS SHE SAYING THAT LADY LEENE WANTED TO EAT THE HORSE?!
?
CAN THIS REALLY BE THE SAME LITTLE MONSTER.
...THAT USED TO GREASE THE GUARDROOM FLOOR...
...AND HIDE SPITTING LIZARDS IN SIR KELD'S BED-PAN?"
Ha ha!
Ha ha!
WHAT?!
I MEAN, HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED...
...THAT EVER SINCE I MADE THE PALACE COOK NAME OUR PIGS, PORK CHOPS HAVE BEEN CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT FROM HIS MENU?

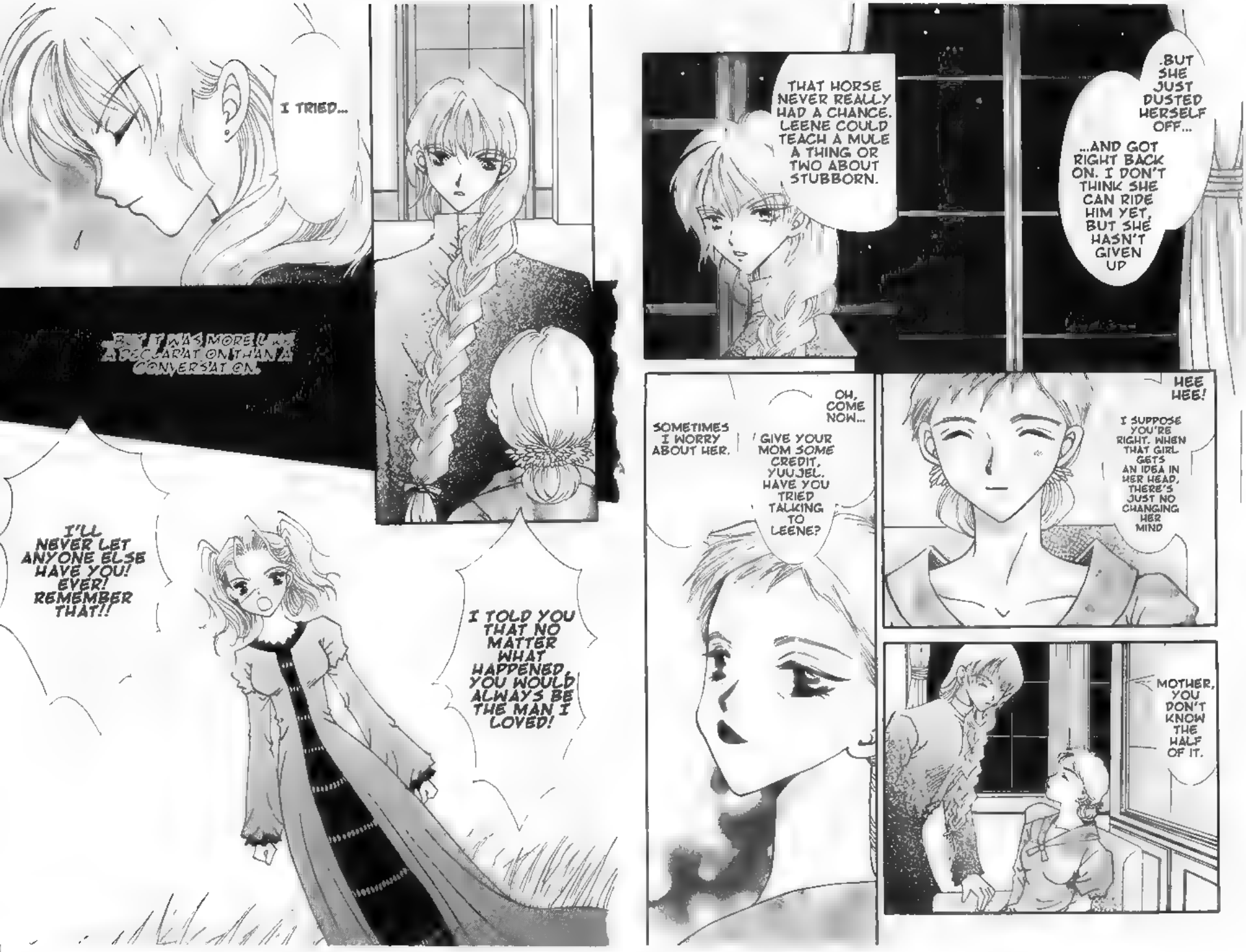
にんまり♡
YO, BARTENDER! HURRY UP WITH THAT REFILL!
DIDN'T ANYONE TELL YOU THAT IT'S DANGEROUS TO KEEP A DRUNK WAITING?!

DO YOU HAVE PLANS FOR TONIGHT?
UH... SURE. I GUESS.
BECAUSE SIR VORD...
...HAS OFFERED TO TAKE US ALL OUT ON THE TOWN!
WHAT DO YOU THINK? C'MON, IT'LL BE FUN!

YOU SEE, JILL, YOU NEED TO LEARN TO LET LOOSE EVERY NOW AND THEN.
LIFE'S TOO SHORT TO SPEND ALL OF IT SOBER. GETTING DRUNK IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL.
AND MY SOUL IS JUST ABOUT PRISTINE!
.....
.....
CAPTAIN, YOU SURE THIS WAS A GOOD IDEA? I MEAN, WE CAN BARELY KEEP HER FROM DANCING ON THE TABLES AND MAKING A COMPLETE ASS OUT OF HERSELF WHEN SHE'S SOBER.
BESIDES, THE RATE I'M PUTTING THESE BACK, ISHTAR WON'T BE THE ONLY ONE DANCING ON TABLES.
C'MON! YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT IT LIKE IT'S A BAD THING!
IF WE HAD TRIED TO STOP HER, SHE WOULD'VE SNUCK OUT. SO WE MIGHT AS WELL SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE SHOW!
Ha ha haaaw!

.....

YOU KNOW, CAPTAIN...
..I MUST ADMIT THAT I'VE CHANGED MY MIND ABOUT VORD. HE WOULD BE A GOOD MATCH FOR ISHTAR.
AND THE PRINCE OF MIL SEII? NO! EXACTLY HER TYPE... AND FOR THAT HE SHOULD BE PROUD.
WELL...
...I CAN'T SEE HER HOOKING UP WITH THE PRINCE OF ZI ALDA. THE PRINCESS ISN'T THE TYPE TO SHARE HER KING WITH HALF OF PHELIOSTA.
SO, OUT OF THE THREE PRINCES OF LA NAAN .
..SIR VORD IS CAPABLE OF CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION AND HE DOESN'T WEAR A DRESS. THE GUY GETS MY VOTE!
.....


I TRIED...
BUT IT WAS MORE LIKE A DECLARATION THAN A CONVERSATION.
I'LL NEVER LET ANYONE ELSE HAVE YOU! EVER! REMEMBER THAT!!
I TOLD YOU THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED, YOU WOULD ALWAYS BE THE MAN I LOVED!
THAT HORSE NEVER REALLY HAD A CHANCE. LEENE COULD TEACH A MULE A THING OR TWO ABOUT STUBBORN.
...BUT SHE JUST DUSTED HERSELF OFF...
...AND GOT RIGHT BACK ON. I DON'T THINK SHE CAN RIDE HIM YET, BUT SHE HASN'T GIVEN UP
SOMETIMES I WORRY ABOUT HER.
OH, COME NOW...
GIVE YOUR MOM SOME CREDIT, YUUJEL. HAVE YOU TRIED TALKING TO LEENE?
HEE HEE!
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. WHEN THAT GIRL GETS AN IDEA IN HER HEAD, THERE'S JUST NO CHANGING HER MIND
MOTHER, YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT.

YUUJEL, I APPRECIATE ALL THE TIME YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING WITH ME LATELY...
.....
AND WHAT ABOUT ASHLEY? HAVE YOU TALKED TO HIM?
...BUT I THINK YOUR VISITS HAVE AS MUCH TO DO WITH AVOIDING ASHLEY...
...AS THEY DO WITH CATCHING UP WITH ME.
YOU MUST TALK TO ASHLEY, AND THE TWO OF YOU MUST DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT LEENE.
IT'S DIFFICULT. I REALIZE THAT. BUT YOU'RE AN ADULT NOW.
YOU CAN'T KEEP RUNNING FROM YOUR PROBLEMS. AND I KNOW YOU CARE ABOUT THEM...
YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE.
NEVER COULD KEEP ANYTHING FROM YOU.

...I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW THAT I DID WHAT YOU ASKED.
I CHANGED MY WILL.
I'LL TALK TO HIM. TO BOTH OF THEM...
YUUJEL, BEFORE YOU LEAVE...

THANK YOU, MOTHER.
I'M SORRY. I REALIZE THIS WILL BRING DISHONOR TO YOUR NAME...
DON'T BE SORRY.
LIKE YOU SAID, THIS IS FOR THE BEST.
I'M JUST GLAD I COULD HELP.
OH, MOM...

!!
HAW HAW HAAW!
キャハ

吸血遊戯
ゼ・アルダ
南領篇
Act.12
THIS MORON'S SO DRUNK I COULD JUMP ON HIS LAP AND FLASH HIM, AND I DOUBT HE'D NOTICE...
BUT I CAN'T LET ANYONE ELSE SEE ME...
...DROP THE PILL IN HIS DRINK.
AND ABOVE ALL ELSE, I CAN'T CHICKEN OUT.
.....

THEY'RE ALL TOTALLY SLOSHED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE SEES IN THIS IDIOT.
I DOUBT VORD WILL EVEN NOTICE HE'S GONE BLIND UNTIL TOMORROW MORNING.
HEY, VORD!
BOTTOMS UP, YOU LIGHTWEIGHT!
Which, come to think of it, isn't all that different from Ishtar.
MOST OF THE TIME HE OPENS HIS MOUTH, IT'S TO BELCH, AND THE FEW TIMES HE HAS TRIED TO SPEAK HE'S BEEN UTTERLY INCOHERENT.

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ガヤ
ゴク

I THINK THAT'S OUR CUE.
LET'S GET HER OUT OF HERE BEFORE SHE STARTS TAKING OFF HER CLOTHES
YEAH, SHE'S COMPLETELY TANKED.
GREAT IDEA. ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW?

WHAT?! YOU CAN'T BE DONE!
WHAT SORT OF MAN QUITS AFTER EIGHT PINTS?! YOU DRINK LIKE A LITTLE GIRL!
One Ishtar is bad enough, and I'm seeing double!
NAH, I'M DONE!
YOU ARE A LITTLE GIRL, AREN'T YOU?! YOU'RE REALLY PRINCESS VORD! THAT'S WHY YOU LIKED ME BETTER WHEN YOU THOUGHT DUZIE WAS ME!!!
.....

Did Vord just come on to Ishtar's cat?!!
Say what?!
きゃっ きゃっ きゃっ
OH, NO YOU DON'T!
YOU CAN'T HAVE LIL' DUZIE! HE'S MINE! AND SOMETIMES HE'S ME!
?
?
?

PRINCESS, THAT'S THE FIRST TIME...
...I'VE EVER BEEN ACCUSED OF HOMO-SEXUALITY, NECROPHILIA AND BESTIALITY, ALL IN THE SAME BREATH
And that's saying something.
?!
ゴゴゴゴ
WHAT THE HELL. I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO SHY AWAY FROM NEW EXPERIENCES...
なでなで
SO HOW ABOUT YOU AND I GO FIND US A NICE QUIET CORNER SOME-WHERE, KITTY?

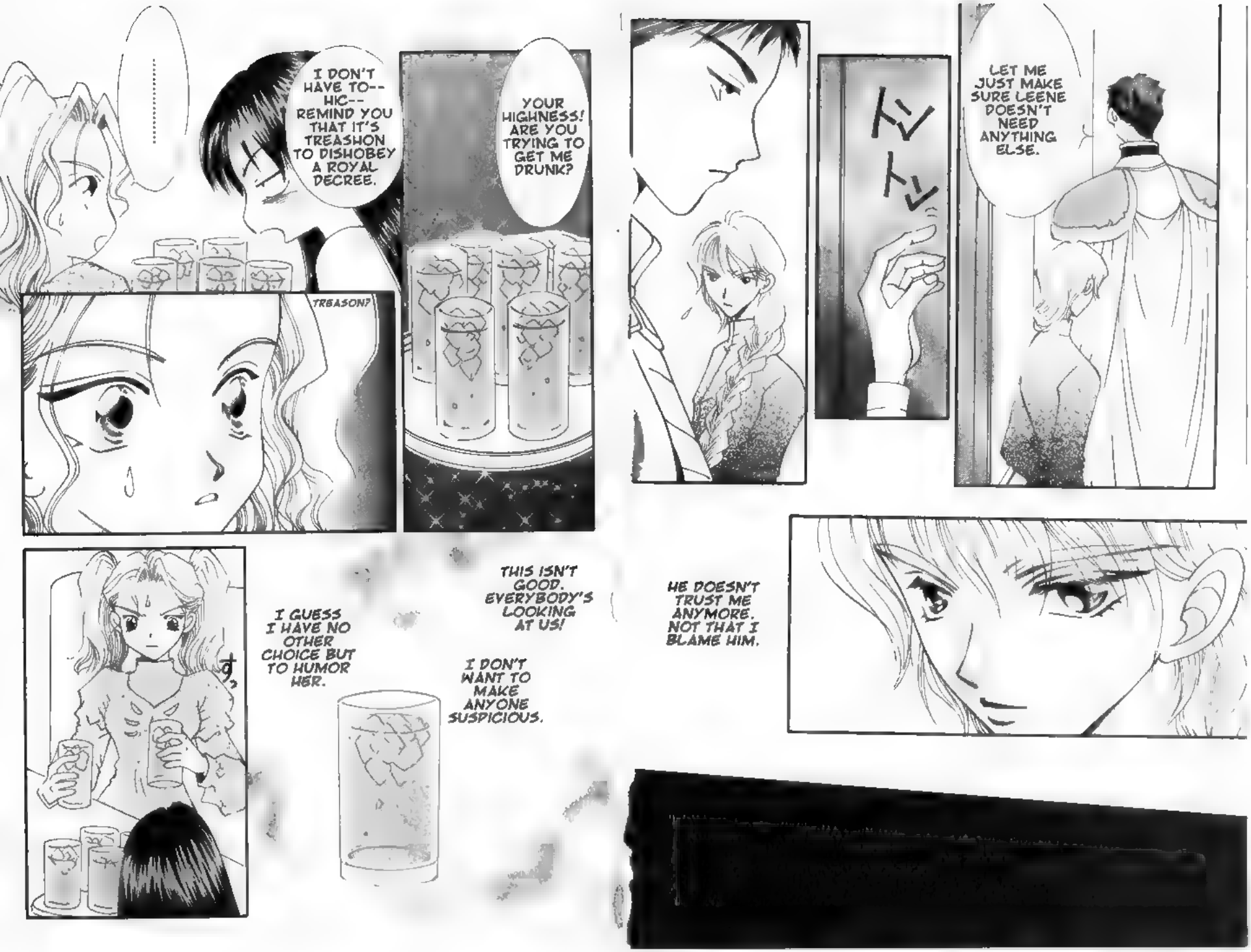
HEY!
LEENE! SHOW THISH LITTLE GIRLY MAN HOW A REAL LADY DRINKS!
DRINK UP! LESSEE YOU POUND 'EM SISTER!
P-P-POUND 'EM?
ISHTAR, PEOPLE MAY CALL YOU "HIGHNESS," BUT THAT'S NOT A LITERAL TITLE!
HELLO, ASHLEY.
OUT FOR A MIDNIGHT STROLL? I PREFER THE WATER GARDENS MYSELF.
OR DO YOU HAVE A MESSAGE FOR MY MOTHER?
NEITHER.

YOU MUST TALK TO ASHLEY...
...AND THE TWO OF YOU MUST DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT LEENE.

SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS.
LADY SONIA SENT FOR ME.

ASHLEY?
LET'S GO TO MY ROOM.
I THINK A BIT OF PRIVACY MAY BE IN ORDER.
SHE CALLED YOU, BUT I'M THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO TALK TO YOU.

SHE'S NOT LEAVING ANYTHING TO CHANCE.
HEH, HEH...
MOTHER...


.....
I DON'T HAVE TO-- HIC-- REMIND YOU THAT IT'S TREASHON TO DISHOBEY A ROYAL DECREE.
YOUR HIGHNESS! ARE YOU TRYING TO GET ME DRUNK?
TREASON?
トントン
LET ME JUST MAKE SURE LEENE DOESN'T NEED ANYTHING ELSE.
HE DOESN'T TRUST ME ANYMORE. NOT THAT I BLAME HIM.
THIS ISN'T GOOD. EVERYBODY'S LOOKING AT US!
I GUESS I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO HUMOR HER.
I DON'T WANT TO MAKE ANYONE SUSPICIOUS.

DARRES!!! FINALLY, SOMEONE WHO CAN PUT 'EM DOOOWN! NOW, C'MON OVER HERE AND SHOW THESE LIGHT-WEIGHTS HOW IT'S DONE!!
I've got a screwdriver with your name on it, big man!
ポイ
GRRRR!
HUH?
BETTER SEND FOR ANOTHER ROUND THEN, BECAUSE THESE BABIES ARE MINE!
YOU HAVE SOME CATCHING UP TO DO, GIRLIE! YOU'RE NOT DONE UNTIL YOU'VE DOWNED ALL OF THESE!!
C'MON! CHUG THAT THING! CHUG, CHUG, CHUG!!!
ゴクン
ALL OF THEM?!
I THINK SHE'S HAD ENOUGH, ISHTAR.

I'VE BEEN WANTING TO TELL YOU THAT FOR A LONG TIME.
I LOVE YOU.
I KNOW YOU DON'T LOVE ME, BUT I NEEDED TO GET IT OFF MY CHEST
PRINCESS, I...
...I...
AND NOW, I THINK IT'S TIME THAT I LET GO, AND GET ON WITH MY LIFE.
.....!?
OH, YEAH! SUCK THAT BABY DOWN! GIVE MAMA A LESSON IN GETTIN' SLOSHED!
.....

THE ISHTAR THAT I LOVE...
...IS EQUAL PARTS OF BOTH.
TRUTH BE TOLD, I COULD NEVER CHOOSE...
BETWEEN...
...THE TWO ISHTARS.
WAIT! WHISH ISHTAR ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH? ME OR DUSHIE?
HEH, HEH!
BOTH OF YOU.
JUST DON'T PUKE ON ME, MAN.
OOOKAY, THAT'S SOMETHING A DRUNK ON THE VERGE OF THROWING UP DOES NOT WANT TO HEAR
.....

I ALREADY KNOW.
LEENE BLACKMAILED YOU INTO MAKING SOME SORT OF SUICIDE PACT, RIGHT?
WHAT?
.....!?
.....
...BUT I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT HAPPENED LAST YEAR I OWE YOU AN EXPLA-NATION
I KNOW...
..THAT THIS IS SOMETHING I SHOULD HAVE SAID AWHILE AGO...

.....
...THIS EVENING HAS GOTTEN REALLY FREAKING WEIRD.
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...
I THINK PHELIOS MAY HAVE BEEN RESHURRECTED! THISH GUY AT THE BAR SAYS HE'S MY DADDY!

I'VE GOTTEN USED TO HER PULLING MY STRINGS.
HAVEN'T YOU?
.....
WHEN WE WERE KIDS, YOU AND I USED TO JOKE ABOUT HOW SHE VIEWED US AS TOYS.
TO HER, YOU AND I ARE NOTHING SHORT OF LIVING DOLLS FOR HER TO BEND TO HER EVERY WHIM

...EVEN IF IT'S NOT WITH HIM.
...HOW CAN HE GIVE UP ON HER SO EASILY?
IF YORD REALLY LOVES ISHTAR...
GO HOME?! ARE YOU NUTS?!
HE'S LETTING GO...
HE'S LETTING HER GO, BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T LOVE HIM.
...YOU'VE NEVER...
I WON'T GIVE UP.
I WON'T GIVE UP ON YOU, YUUJEL.
BECAUSE I KNOW.
HE WANTS HER TO BE HAPPY...
...BECAUSE HE LOVES HER.

HOW LUCKY HE IS?
WELL, LET ME SAY THIS. IF HE DOESN'T REALIZE HOW LUCKY HE IS TO HAVE YOU, THEN HE'S NOT WORTH IT.
.....
VORD, YOU CALLED THESE! SO DRINK UP, BUCKO!
YOU GUYSH ARE LETTING GOOD BOOZE GO TO WASTE.

WELL, I HAVEN'T EITHER.
...BEEN WITH SOMEONE YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH. HAVE YOU, MY LOVE?
.....?
LET ME GUESS, YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE SAD DRUNKS, AREN'T YOU?
SOMETHING WRONG?

HA
HA
HAW!
BWAAAH
DUMP!
SPLASH!

HEY, THAT'S RIGHT! HAND IT OVER!
NO! NOT THAT ONE!

YOU BITCH!
YOU COULD HAVE BLINDED HIM!
?!

CUTE, PRINCESS REAL CUTE.

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!?
.....
HE'S NOT THAT DRUNK, LEENE.

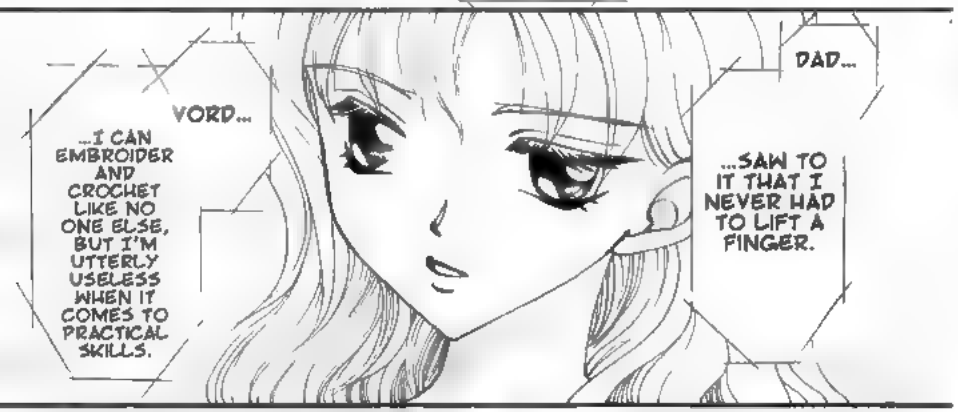
ALL THAT BOOZE BATH REALLY DID WAS MESS UP HIS HAIR. AND I'M NOT SURE THAT WAS A BAD THING.
UH, LADY LEENE...
Vord's fine.
So, relax.
AND VORD, YOU NEED TO SEE A DOCTOR. FOR A LOT OF THINGS, BUT ESPECIALLY FOR YOUR EYES!
PRINCESS ISHTAR, YOU NEED TO GO BACK TO YOUR ROOM AND SLEEP IT OFF!
LET GO OF ME, YOU IDIOTS! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON!
ギャア ギャア
HEY, DARRESH! LET'S GO DANCING!
I want to see Ishtar's face when she hears!
.....

HEY, FALAN! GUESS WHAT MEANIE LEENEY TOLD ME!
SHE SAID THAT I COULD MAKE VORD GO BLIND BY DUMPING MEAD IN HISH EYES!
IZZAT TRUE?
Hic!

.....
FALAN? SO ISHTAR'S BEEN TALKING TO HER COUSIN ALL THIS TIME...
I JUST FIGURED SHE WAS WASTED ENOUGH TO TRY CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION WITH HER REFLECTION.

SORRY ABOUT THAT.
THE BROKEN GLASSES ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BILL.
YOUR FRIENDS ARE QUITE CHARMING, SIR
ジャラ
COME AGAIN. OR NOT.
AND DON'T FORGET YOUR MIRROR.
WHAT MIRROR?

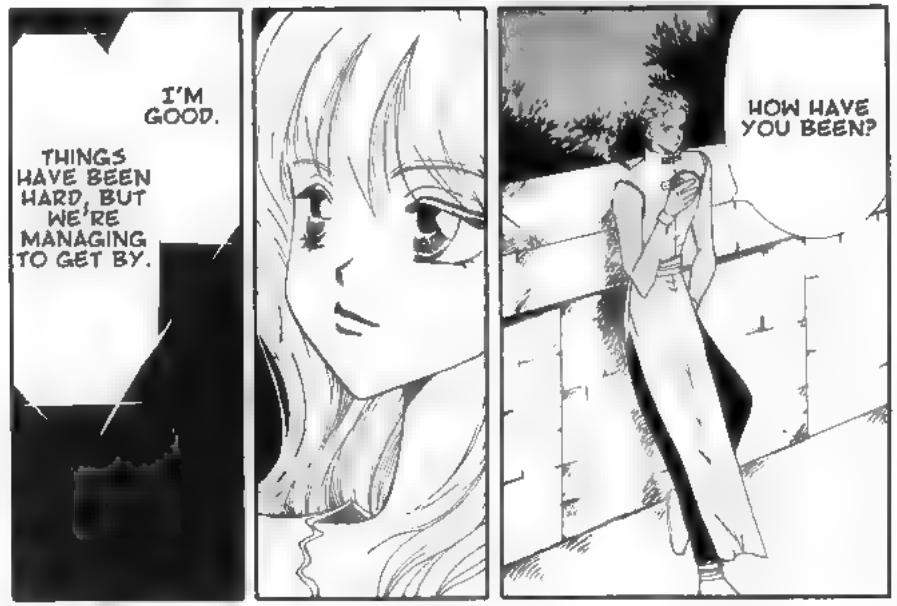
I FEEL SO USELESS! I CAN'T DO ANYTHING. SERIOUSLY, VORD, I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO SADDLE A HORSE.
I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW EASY I HAD IT BEFORE. MY FATHER KEPT ME SO SHELTERED.


VORD...
...I CAN EMBROIDER AND CROCHET LIKE NO ONE ELSE, BUT I'M UTTERLY USELESS WHEN IT COMES TO PRACTICAL SKILLS.
DAD...
...SAW TO IT THAT I NEVER HAD TO LIFT A FINGER.

I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL FIGURE THINGS OUT.

HI, VORD! DID ISHTAR FINALLY PASS OUT?

NOT QUITE.


I'M GOOD.
THINGS HAVE BEEN HARD, BUT WE'RE MANAGING TO GET BY.
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT US!
WE'LL MANAGE. I CAN'T KEEP ASKING PEOPLE TO BAIL ME OUT.
.....!!
FALAN...
YOU JUST KEEP ISHTAR OUT OF TROUBLE. SHE REALLY LIKES YOU, YOU KNOW.
AND IN THE MEANTIME, I CAN KNIT SWEATERS!
WELL, I WISH YOU LUCK, SIR VORD.
GOOD NIGHT.
!!!!
IF YOU EVER NEED ANY HELP... OR ANYTHING...
...I'D BE HAPPY TO...UH...
WAIT, FALAN!
QWQ,
QWQ,

SIR VORD?
IF MY LADY WILL...
YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL. LIKE A GODDESS...

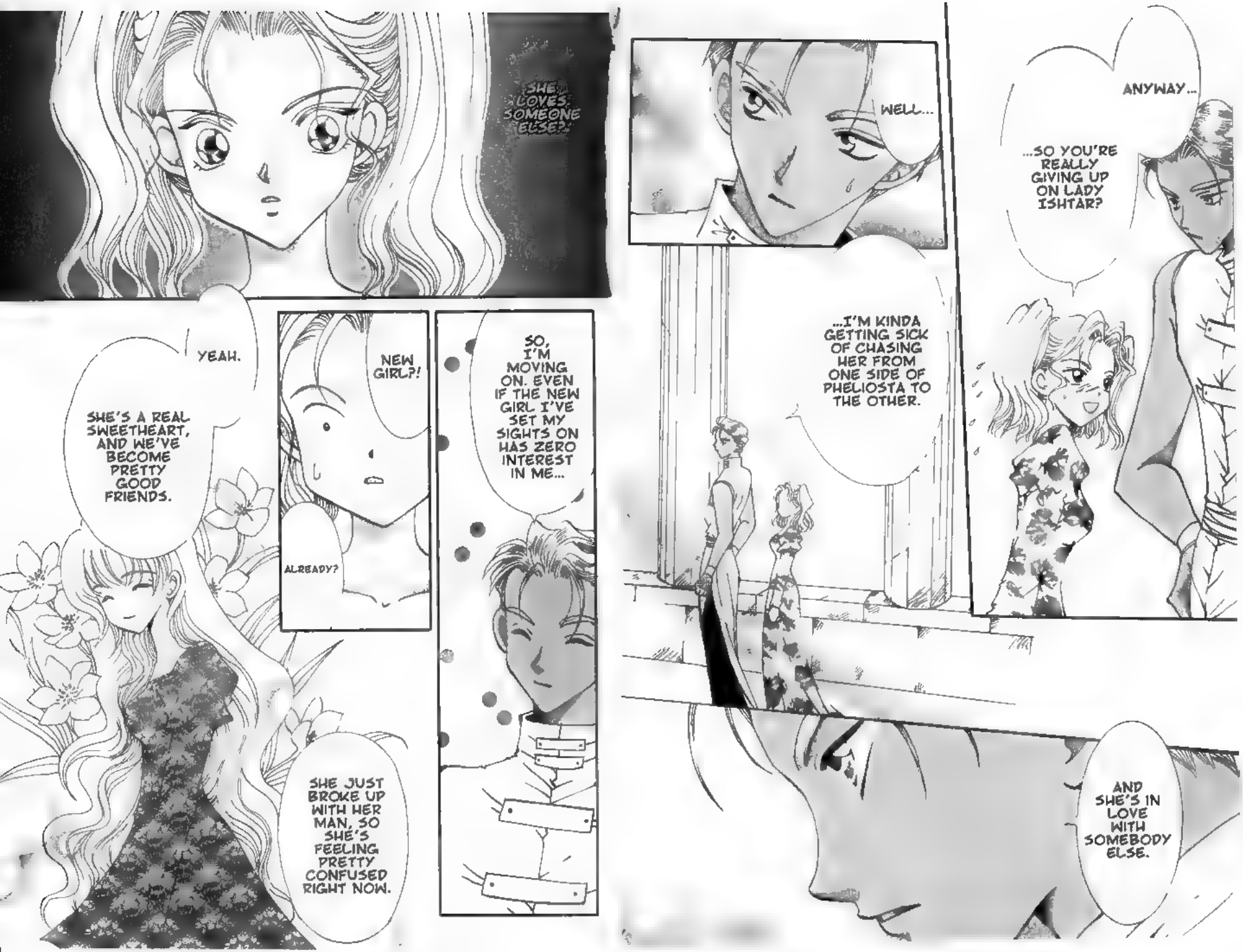
...BUT I HEARD...
LOOK, I DON'T REMEMBER A WHOLE LOT ABOUT LAST NIGHT...
HOPEFULLY, YOU WEREN'T WEARING YOUR GOOD TUNIC.
...THAT I DUMPED A DRINK OVER YOUR HEAD.
I'M SORRY, VORD. I, UH... I WAS A LITTLE DRUNK.
A LITTLE DRUNK?
YOU HAD SAILORS ASKING YOU TO TAKE IT EASY LAST NIGHT! YOU WERE COMPLETELY SMASHED!
I'LL JUST START APOLOGIZING NOW, AND YOU CAN STOP ME WHEN I'VE ATONED ENOUGH. LIKE ON TUESDAY OR SOMETHING.
I'm so sorry. I really am. Forgive me
Those guys were sailors?
...GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE...
I FEEL LIKE SUCH AN IDIOT!

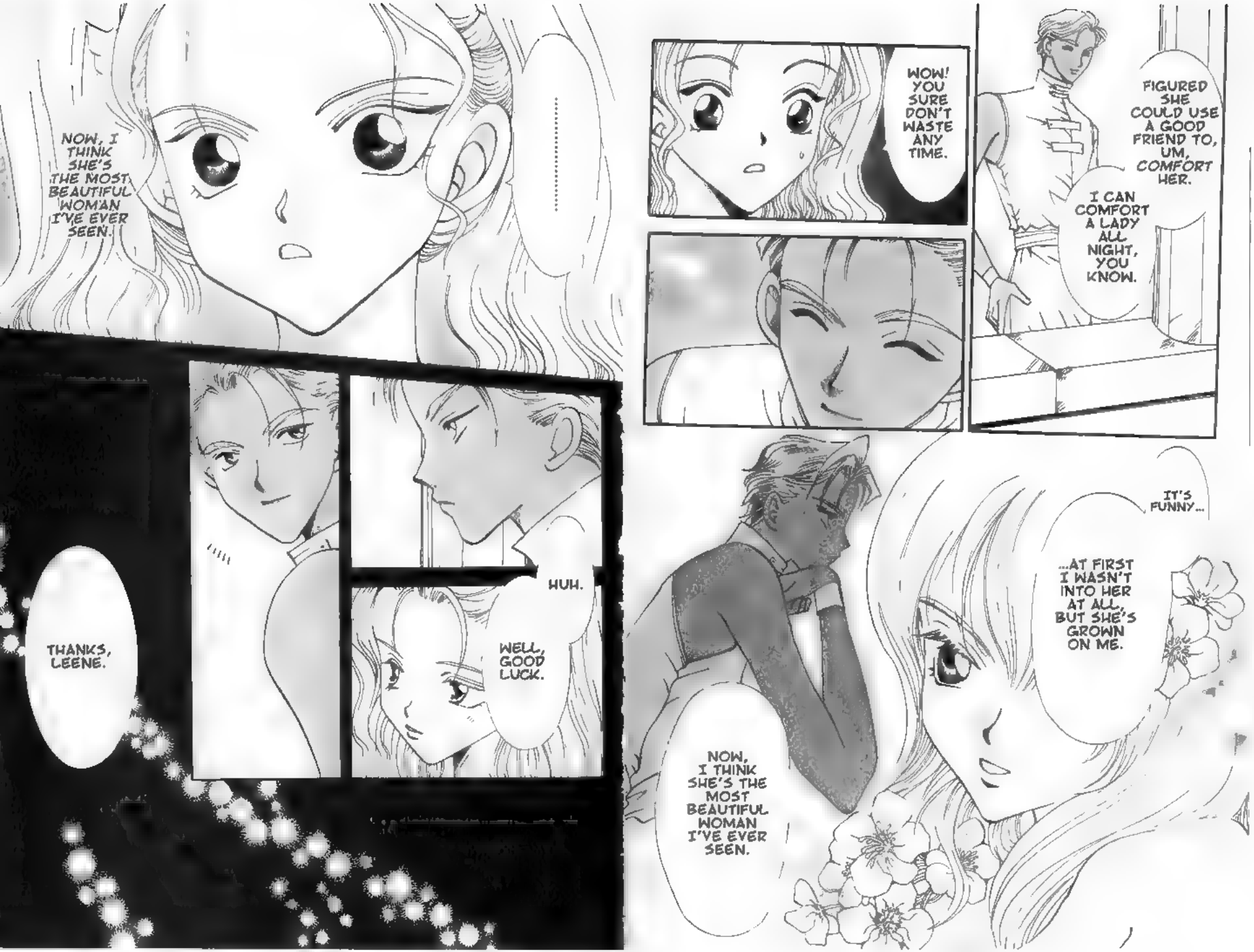
I THINK I'LL HEAD BACK TO CI XENETH. THERE'S SOMEONE THERE IN NEED OF MY HELP. AND I NEED HERS.
WHAT?!
I DON'T THINK WE'RE AT FAREWELL YET.
AND WITH ALL THE TROUBLE YOU'VE CAUSED US, I'M NOT ABOUT TO SAY THANK YOU.
SO, I'LL JUST SAY GOOD LUCK.

FORGET IT.
TO TELL THE TRUTH, I'M MORE UPSET ABOUT THE WASTE OF GOOD MEAD.
EVEN FALAN SAID SO.
BESIDES...
...IT'S MY FAULT YOU WERE OUT DRINKING IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I'M LEAVING, PRINCESS.
YOUR COUSIN AND I HAD A LONG TALK LAST NIGHT.
THAT'S THE ONE.
HUH?! FALAN?!

TAKE CARE, YOUR MAJESTY.
GOOD LUCK, DARRES.
BYE?
.....
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU SLAPPED PRINCESS ISHTAR!
AS THE WIFE OF A GENERAL, YOU HAVE A DUTY TO BEHAVE YOURSELF!
LEENE'S MARRIED? NO WAY!
THE POOR GUY MUST HAVE BEEN ABUSED AS A CHILD.

I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.
ASHLEY SAID THE POISON...
...WOULDN'T WORK UNLESS YOU SWALLOWED IT. SILLY ME. CAUSING A SCENE LIKE THAT.
す
POISON?
WHAT POISON?
OH...UH... ALCOHOL! IT POISONS YOUR MIND, YOU KNOW?
I DON'T CARE IF SHE'S A PRINCESS! SHE WAS WAY OUT OF LINE!
YOU WEREN'T EVEN THERE!
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
SIR VORD!
.....
BUT SHE DID APOLOGIZE. AND SHE HAS THE MOTHER OF ALL HANGOVERS. YOU WANT TO SEE SOMETHING FUNNY? GO UP TO HER AND SAY SOMETHING REALLY, REALLY LOUD.
SHE SURE WAS.


SHE LOVES SOMEONE ELSE?
YEAH.
SHE'S A REAL SWEETHEART, AND WE'VE BECOME PRETTY GOOD FRIENDS.
NEW GIRL?!
ALREADY?
SO, I'M MOVING ON. EVEN IF THE NEW GIRL I'VE SET MY SIGHTS ON HAS ZERO INTEREST IN ME...
SHE JUST BROKE UP WITH HER MAN, SO SHE'S FEELING PRETTY CONFUSED RIGHT NOW.
WELL...
...I'M KINDA GETTING SICK OF CHASING HER FROM ONE SIDE OF PHELIOSTA TO THE OTHER.
ANYWAY...
...SO YOU'RE REALLY GIVING UP ON LADY ISHTAR?
AND SHE'S IN LOVE WITH SOMEBODY ELSE.


NOW, I THINK SHE'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN I'VE EVER SEEN.
.....
THANKS, LEENE.
HUH.
WELL, GOOD LUCK.
WOW! YOU SURE DON'T WASTE ANY TIME.
I CAN COMFORT A LADY ALL NIGHT, YOU KNOW.
FIGURED SHE COULD USE A GOOD FRIEND TO, UM, COMFORT HER.
NOW, I THINK SHE'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN I'VE EVER SEEN.
...AT FIRST I WASN'T INTO HER AT ALL, BUT SHE'S GROWN ON ME.
IT'S FUNNY...

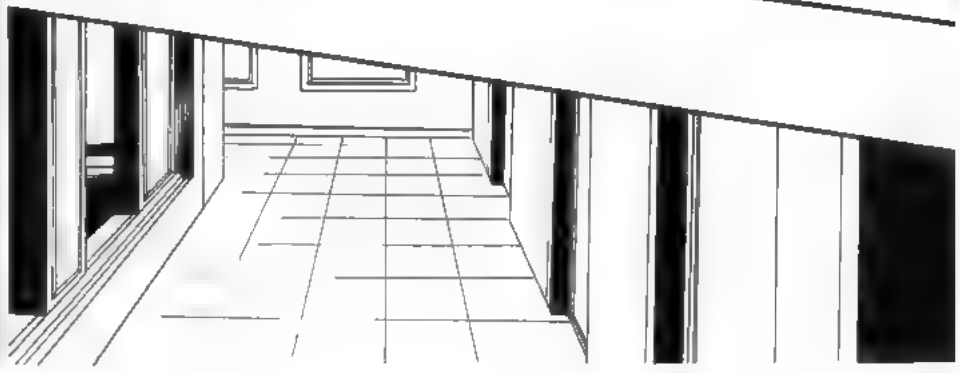
ASHLEY, WE HAVE TO STOP HER!
I THINK SHE MAY HAVE TRIED POISONING SOMEONE LAST NIGHT.
POISON?!
BELIEVE ME, NO ONE TAKES THE SAFETY OF THE PRINCESS MORE SERIOUSLY THAN I DO. I'VE TAKEN STEPS TO KEEP EVERYBODY SAFE...
...FROM MY WIFE.

MAN, I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE SHE'S MARRIED.
O-KAY, THIS IS KINDA AWKWARD...
WHAT? IS SHE WAITING FOR A HUG OR SOMETHING?
?
SHE'S BEEN ASKING ME ABOUT POISONS LATELY.
I KNOW WHAT LEENE'S UP TO.

SHE COULD SEND MONSTERS RUNNING WITH THAT GLARE OF HERS.
I DON'T KNOW. SHE *DID* SLAP ISHTAR, SO HER HEART'S IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT LEAST.
IT'S A DAMN SHAME WE DIDN'T HAVE HER IN CI XENETH JENED WOULD HAVE LOVED HER.
...BUT LEENE RAISES THE BITCH BAR TO STUNNING NEW HEIGHTS.
THAT LITTLE LEENE IS SOMETHING ELSE. I THOUGHT ISHTAR WAS A HANDFUL...

.....
YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THAT.

.....
IN HER PRESENT STATE, SHE'S A DANGER TO EVERYONE... INCLUDING HERSELF.
I REALLY DON'T KNOW WITH HER, LUCY.



WHO ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH?
LISTEN CLOSELY...
...BECAUSE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT.
NO MORE GAMES, PRINCESS. I WANT A REAL ANSWER.
BUT HER LOVER...
TRYING TO HURT HER OBVIOUSLY ISN'T WORKING.

BUT WHAT WORRIES ME...
...IS THAT OUR DEAR PRINCESS ISHTAR...
...SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN QUITE AN INTEREST IN HER.
.....

THAT'S IT! OH, LEENE, YOU'RE A GENIUS!
LOOK, I'M REALLY TRYING TO BE A FRIEND TO YOU, BUT IF YOU DON'T WANT IT, MAYBE THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE VYING FOR YOUR MAN THAT WILL!
YOU KNOW, I'M NOT SURE THAT THERE IS.
HMM...
IS THERE?

I'VE GOT ONE LAST PILL...
I'D BETTER MAKE IT COUNT.
SORRY...
...BUT THAT'S PRIVILEGED INFORMATION, LEENE. I CAN'T TELL YA.
GODDAMMIT, ISHTAR! I SAID NO MORE GAMES!!
ギグッ
BUT WHAT'S WITH ALL THE DRAMA? "YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT"? YEESH!

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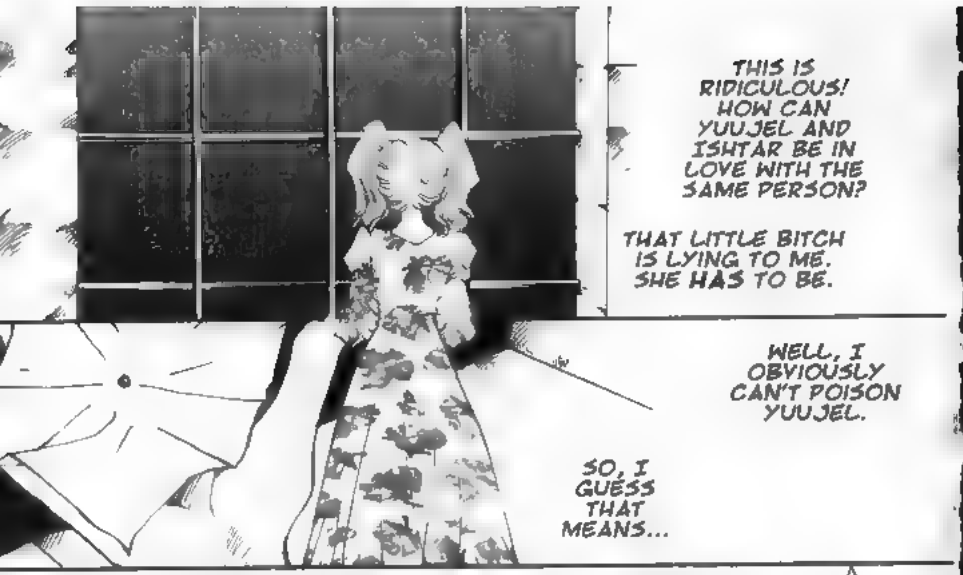
THIS IS RIDICULOUS! HOW CAN YUUJEL AND ISHTAR BE IN LOVE WITH THE SAME PERSON?
THAT LITTLE BITCH IS LYING TO ME. SHE HAS TO BE.
WELL, I OBVIOUSLY CAN'T POISON YUUJEL.
SO, I GUESS THAT MEANS...

YOU CANNOT DO THIS!!
LADY SONIA!
HAVE YOU GONE MAD?!

.....

I WANTED THERE TO BE NO MISUNDER-STANDING.
THIS IS YUUJEL'S FIRST AND LAST REQUEST TO YOU AS YOUR LORD.
I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CONVINCE YOU OF HIS WISDOM.

MY LADY IS CLEARLY NOT OF SOUND MIND! WHERE'S HER BLOODY DOCTOR?!
.....
I KNEW YOU'D BE UPSET.
AND THAT'S WHY I ALLOWED YOU TO READ MY WILL WHILE I'M STILL ALIVE.

YUUJEL'S WISH? LADY SONIA'S WILL?
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE SOAP OPERA OF THE CENTURY...AND I'M MISSING IT!
I AM STILL YOUR SOVEREIGN
SO, IF ANY OF YOU GENTLEMEN HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY...
...SPEAK NOW OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR PEACE.
AND I WILL DECIDE...
...HOW MY LANDS WILL BE DISPOSED OF AFTER I'M GONE.

...BUT I BELIEVE HE HAS OUR COUNTRY'S BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.
.....
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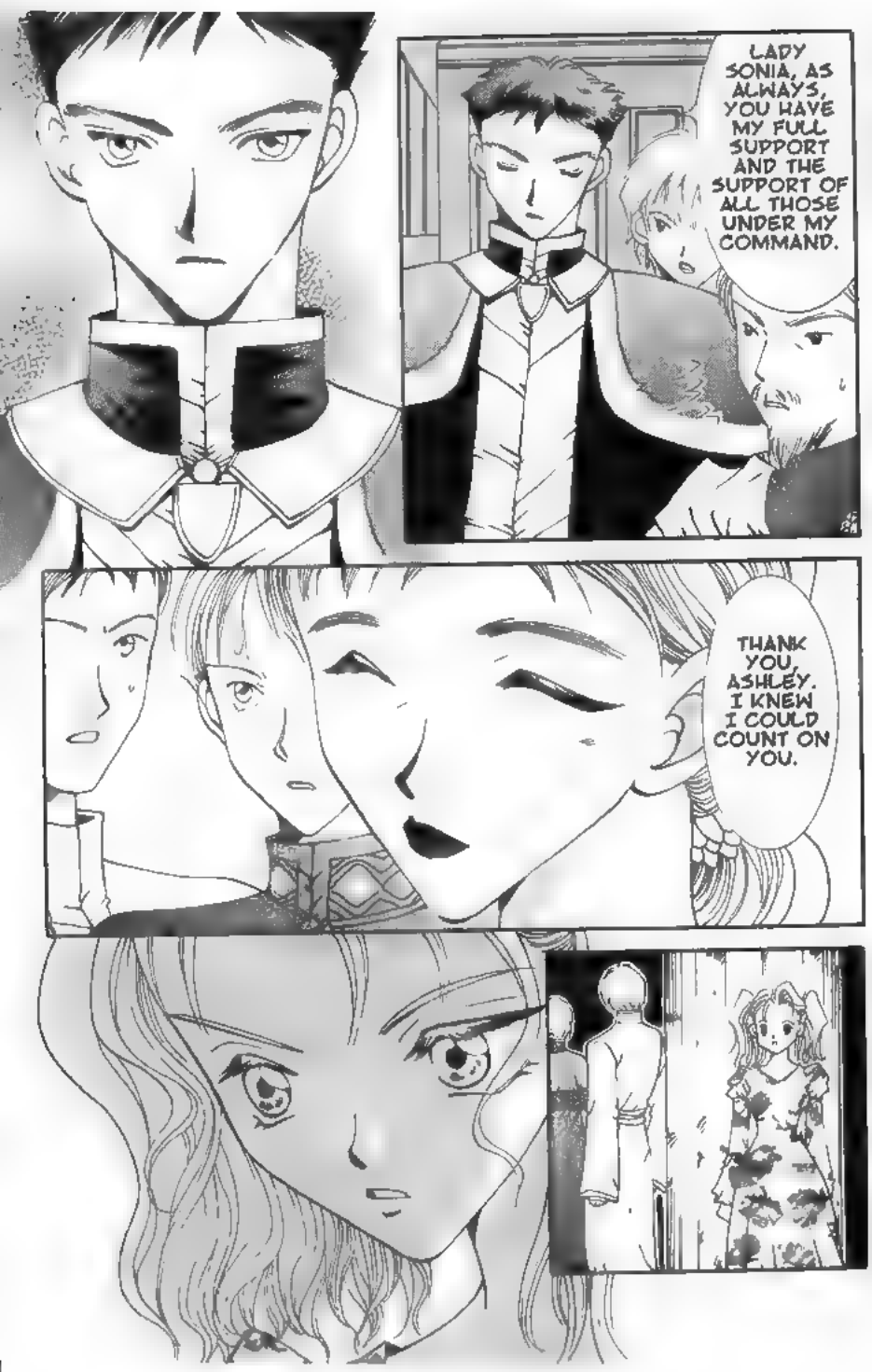
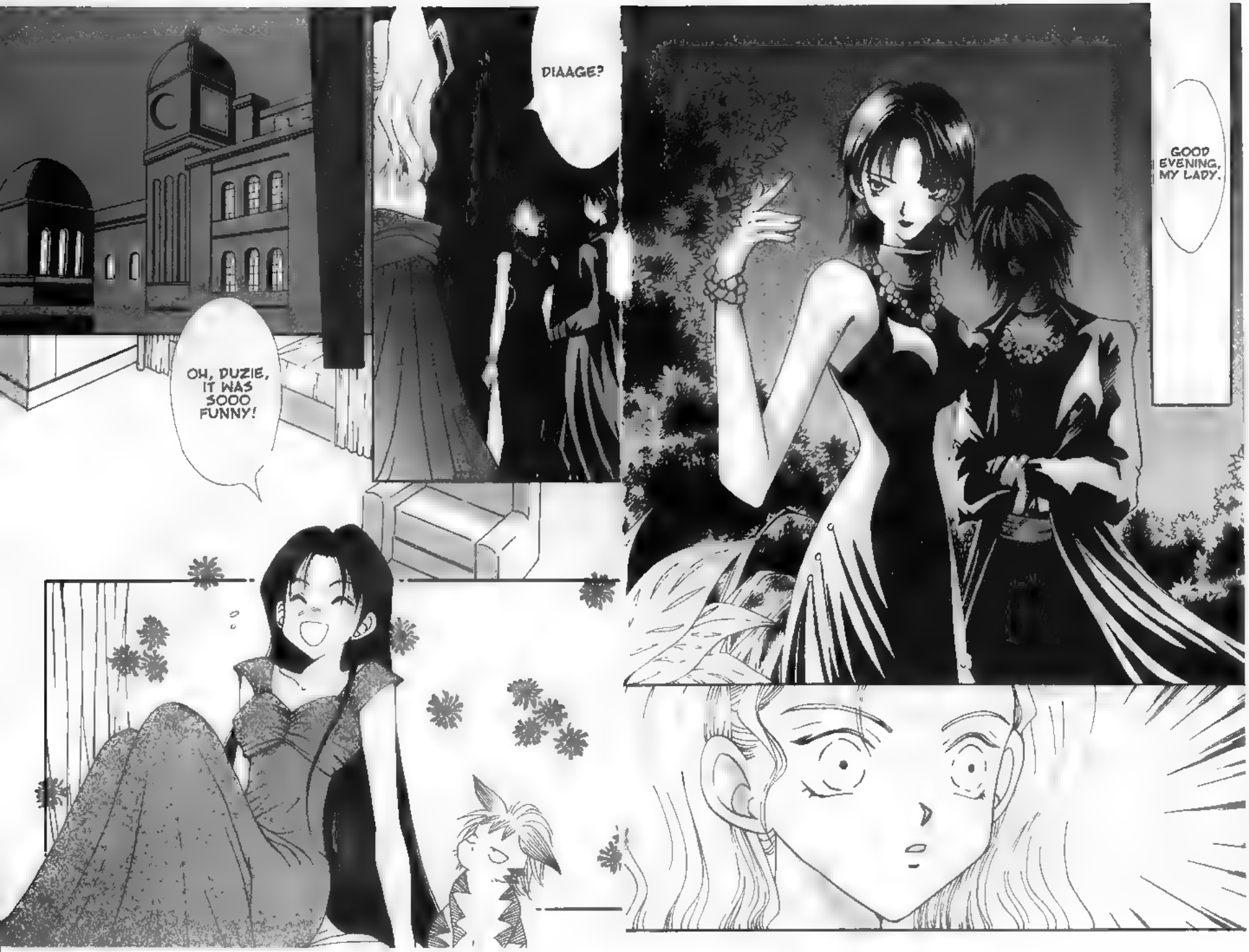

LADY SONIA, AS ALWAYS, YOU HAVE MY FULL SUPPORT AND THE SUPPORT OF ALL THOSE UNDER MY COMMAND.
THANK YOU, ASHLEY. I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON YOU.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YUUJEL IS DOING THIS OUT OF HIS DEEP LOVE...
...FOR BOTH LADY ISHTAR AND FOR THE KINGDOM OF PHELIOSTA.
II
YUUJEL DOESN'T LOVE THE SAME PERSON AS ISHTAR. YUUJEL IS IN LOVE WITH ISHTAR HERSELF!

I WAS HOPING SHE WAS JUST A PHASE, LIKE THE REST OF HIS FLINGS.
OR THAT HE HAD SIMPLY BEEN SEDUCED BY HER FUTURE AS QUEEN OF PHELIOSTA.
BUT...
NO, I DIDN'T!
I SUSPECTED, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW FOR SURE.
DEEP LOVE?!
...THAT YUUJEL LOVED PRINCESS ISHTAR.
I KNEW ALL ALONG...
WHO AM I KIDDING?


DIAAGE?
GOOD EVENING, MY LADY.
OH, DUZIE, IT WAS SOOO FUNNY!

LEENE SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO I'M IN LOVE WITH. AT ONE POINT, I HAD HER CONVINCED I WAS HEAD OVER HEELS FOR HER HORSE!
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT GOES THROUGH THAT GIRL'S HEAD HALF THE TIME, BUT DAMN!
And to think that she's OLDER than me!
SHE SURE MAKES FOR SOME ENTERTAINING AFTERNOONS.
YESTERDAY, ISHTAR THOUGHT CONVERSING WITH LEENE WAS ON PAR WITH COMMODE CLEANING, AND NOW THE TWO ARE BEST FRIENDS?
I'M STARTING TO SEE A PATTERN HERE. IN THE END, ISHTAR FINDS SOMETHING TO LIKE IN EVERYBODY
I'M TRYING NOT TO GAG HERE.
DO YOU LOVE ME, ISHTAR?

IF DARRES WERE TO DIE TODAY...
...WOULD HER LOVE FOR ME CHANGE?
I WONDER...

IT'S DIFFERENT, BUT I LOVE YOU JUST AS MUCH!
LIKE YOU LOVE DARRES?
OF COURSE I DO, SILLY.
SHE STILL TREATS ME LIKE A GIRLFRIEND. OR A PET...
DIFFERENT...

YOU'RE GOING BACK TO PHELIOSTA AFTER THE PARTY.
WHO KNOWS WHEN WE'LL SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN?!
COME ON, DARRES. LIVE A LITTLE.
I'M ON DUTY!
I CAN'T GO!
YOU CAN GO, DARRES. I HAVE DUZIE TO PROTECT ME!
And if that doesn't work, there's Jill and Krai.
ISHTAR...
...I THINK I--
I TOLD YOU! I JUST CAN'T!!
.....?

C'MON, DARRES! I DO BELIEVE THE PRINCESS GAVE YOU AN ORDER.
ポン
THANK YOU, YOUR MAJESTY.
ブン
ブン
ギクッ
AND I DO BELIEVE WE HAVE A LITTLE EAVESDROPPING TO DO

LADY ISHTAR, STAY OUT OF THIS!
YUJINN, I'LL LET DARRES GO WITH YOU NOW...
..AS LONG AS YOU PROMISE TO...
...STAY HERE WITH AUNT SONIA FOR AS LONG AS SHE NEEDS YOU.
?
WHAT DO YOU SAY? DO WE HAVE A DEAL?

IF I WANTED ISHTAR DEAD, SHE'D HAVE HAD A TOUCHING FUNERAL AGES AGO.

I HAVE FAR LOFTIER GOALS THAN THAT.

OH, LASSEN, DON'T BE SUCH A PILL.

WITH SONIA SICK, CONTROL OF ZI ALDA IS RIPE FOR THE SEIZING. AND WITH THE MIGHT OF ASHLEY'S ARMY BEHIND ME...
...THE FIVE KINGDOMS WILL FALL, ONE BY ONE.
...NOT TO MENTION VAMPIRES...
...OFTEN GO ASTRAY.
AH, DIAAGE, REMEMBER THAT THE SIMPLEST PLANS OF MICE AND MEN...

HEY, WHEN TWO MEN GET A HOTEL ROOM...
..WHICH ONE OF THEM PAYS?
.....
.....
OH SHIT, DUZIE! THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!
UH...

LOOK, DUZIE! THEY'RE LEAVING THE CASTLE!
OH, THIS IS SO EXCITING! WHERE DO YOU THINK THEY'RE GOING?!
HEY! YOU DON'T THINK THEY'RE HEADING FOR A HOTEL, DO YOU?!
WHAT?! NO!
At least I hope not

IT'S ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS YOU WISH COULD LAST FOREVER.

AND KEEP IN MIND, FOR A VAMPIRE, FOREVER IS A VERY LONG TIME.

MOTHER...
...ALL MY LIFE, I'VE DONE NOTHING...
...BUT RUN AWAY FROM MY PROBLEMS.
MY RESPONSIBILITY TO ZI ALDA, MY DIFFICULTIES WITH LEENE...
EVERYTHING.
WHEN THE GOING GOT TOUGH, I JUST TOOK OFF.
I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE.
WELL, THAT ENDS NOW.

...SO I SHOWED HIM HOW TO GET THERE.
ASHLEY SAID HE WANTED TO TALK TO DARRES...
YOU LEFT SIR DARRES AT ASHLEY'S HOUSE?
WHAT FOR?
MOTHER, THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW.
I PROMISED PRINCESS ISHTAR THAT I'D STAY HERE WITH YOU FOR AS LONG AS YOU NEED ME.
REALLY?

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.....
FROM NOW ON, I PROMISE TO STAY BY YOUR SIDE AND FACE MY PROBLEMS.
THANK YOU, YUUJÉL.
NO MATTER WHAT.

I ALREADY TOLD YOU...

...I WAS WITH SIR ASHLEY, NOT YUJINN!
REALLY? I'M SURE YOU TWO MEN HAD QUITE THE CONVERSATION
HELLOOO, HIGHNESS!
ACTUALLY, WE DID!
YOU'RE SO FULL OF IT!

LEENE?

WHAT DID YOU TWO KNIGHTS DO?
SEE WHICH OF YOU HAD THE BIGGER SWORD?
UH...
.....?
WHAT? NO! LET ME EXPLAIN...

...
YOUR MAJESTY...
FORGET IT, DARRES.
I GET IT.

HOW DID IT GO WITH DARRES?
SO WHAT?
WHAT DID YOU GUYS TALK ABOUT?
WELL.
I THINK HE'S VERY UNDERSTANDING.

YOU LOOK THIRSTY, HIGHNESS.
HOW ABOUT A DRINK?
SO?

PEOPLE LIKE YOUR BEST FRIEND...
...AND YOUR WIFE, RIGHT?
DARRES DOESN'T DO THAT.
HE ACCEPTS PEOPLE FOR WHO THEY ARE.
FORGIVE ME.
...AND NOT HURT ME DEEPLY.
...ABOUT HUMAN NATURE IF YOU THINK YOU CAN SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
YOU HAVE A LOT TO LEARN...

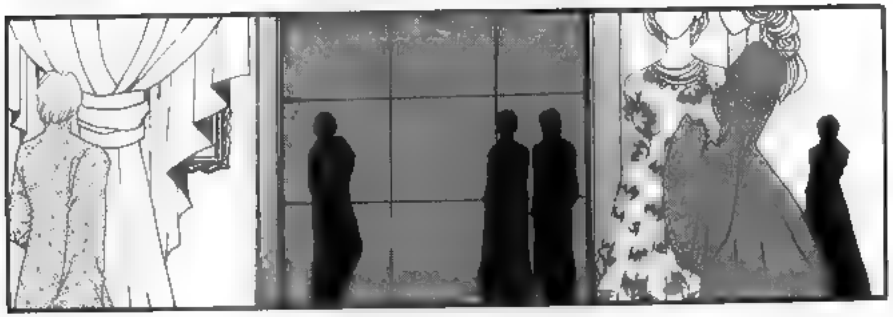
...IF THAT'S REALLY A COMPLIMENT.
I'M NOT SURE...
I ASSURE YOU, IT IS.
PEOPLE WOULD RATHER NOT LISTEN TO THOSE WITH A DIFFERENT WAY OF SEEING THINGS.
I THINK THE PROBLEM IS ONE OF UNDERSTANDING.
COMPASSION IS A RARE TRAIT, YUUJEL. PEOPLE RARELY THINK OF OTHERS THESE DAYS.

...THAT I'VE NEVER SLEPT WITH LEENE.
.....
NEITHER HAVE I.
THE LAST THING I WANTED TO DO WAS MAKE YOU MY ENEMY.
I'M GLAD THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO COUNT ON YOUR SUPPORT.
.....
...I WANT TO MAKE IT VERY CLEAR...
UNDER-STAND EACH OTHER
AND JUST SO WE...

WHAT AM I DOING?
LEENE, YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW WHY THAT ISN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA. AT LEAST NOT IN PUBLIC.
I'M ABOUT TO MURDER...
...THE WOMAN THAT YUUJEL LOVES.
WHAT?
A DRINK?
I GUESS...
...I'LL JUST HAVE SOME JUICE.
.....!

HUH? UH, SURE
YOUR HIGHNESS, CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO KILL SOMEONE?
THIS IS MURDER WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE! AS SURELY AS IF I CUT HER THROAT AND LET HER BLOOD RUN OVER MY HANDS...
I, UH, MUST'VE SPACED THERE FOR A SECOND. I'LL SEE IF I CAN HUNT DOWN SOME JUICE...
BE RIGHT BACK.
LEENE?

YES, YOU ARE.
I'VE TRIED TO KILL BEFORE.
I DID IT TO HURT THE MAN I LOVE.
.....



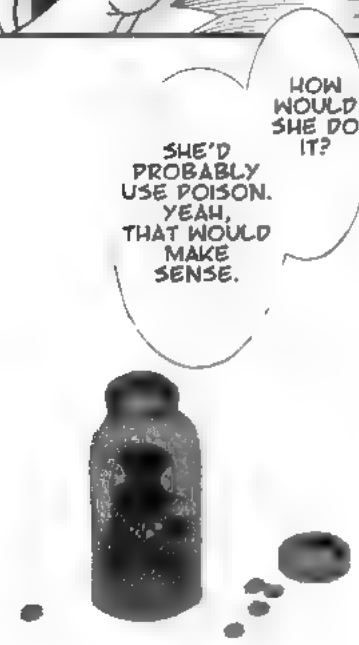
!?
ALL THE TIME!
.....
.....
OF COURSE...
...I HAVEN'T DONE IT YET, BUT YOU NEVER KNOW. AFTER ALL, I'M STILL YOUNG!

AS A GENERAL OF ZI ALDA, ASHLEY SHOULD REALIZE
ASHLEY SAID HE'S TAKEN MEASURES TO KEEP EVERYBODY
...BUT...
...WITH HIS WIFE INVOLVED, I CAN'T IMAGINE HE'S PUT MUCH EFFORT INTO IT.
!!
...I MUST STOP HER. ISHTAR MUST BE PROTECTED AT ANY COST.
IF LEENE IS GOING TO TRY POISONING THE PRINCESS...

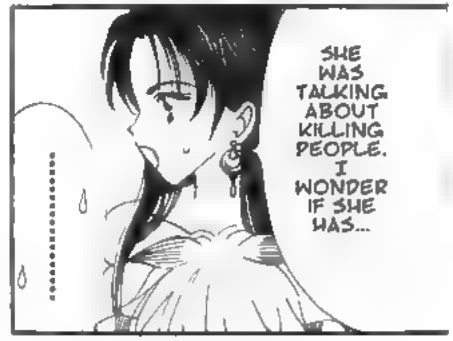
I DON'T THINK SHE KNOWS ANY MAGIC...
...AND SHE'S TOO SHORT TO STAB ANYONE IN THE BACK. UNLESS SHE'S PLANNING ON KILLING ONE OF THE PALACE DWARVES...

.....!?
HEY, LEENE!

DUZIE, IS IT JUST ME...
...OR WAS LEENE ACTING PRETTY STRANGE?


HOW WOULD SHE DO IT?
SHE'D PROBABLY USE POISON. YEAH, THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE.

.....


SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT KILLING PEOPLE. I WONDER IF SHE HAS...
.....

LORD LASSEN, YOU'RE RIGHT ON TIME!
THE SHOW'S ABOUT TO BEGIN.

LORD SHARLEN'S SEEDS ARE...
...ABOUT TO BLOOM.
Ha!
Ha!

YOUR DRINK, YOUR MAJESTY.

.....
SO...
...WHERE IS SHARLEN?

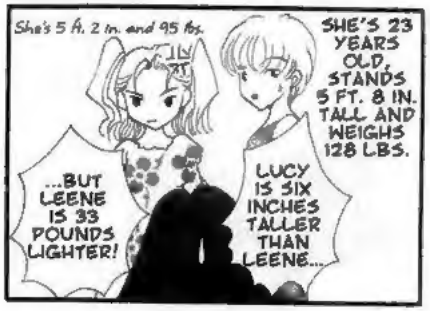
I'VE GOT TO STAY CALM.
EXCUSE ME, HIGHNESS, BUT THE JUICE HAS GONE SOUR.
HER MAJESTY'S DRINK HAS BEEN POISONED!
STOP!!
THANKS!
HUH?
!?
!!

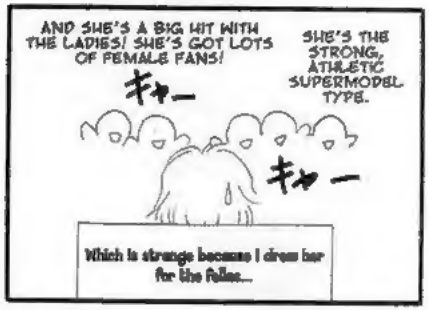
!!
POISON?!
WHO WOULD DARE?!

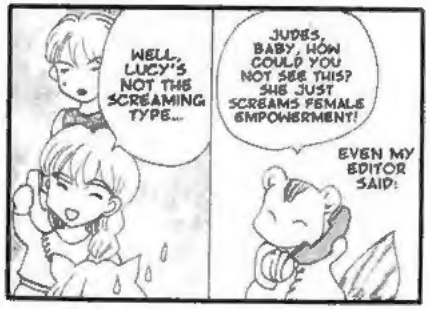
HOW COULD SHE?!
TREASON!
LEENE?
BUT, WHY...?
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 10

Postscript

Lucy


She's 5 ft. 2 in. and 95 lbs.
SHE'S 23 YEARS OLD, STANDS 5 FT. 8 IN. TALL AND WEIGHS 128 LBS.
...BUT LEENE IS 33 POUNDS LIGHTER!
LUCY IS SIX INCHES TALLER THAN LEENE...


AND SHE'S A BIG HIT WITH THE LADIES! SHE'S GOT LOTS OF FEMALE FANS!
キャー
SHE'S THE STRONG, ATHLETIC SUPERMODEL TYPE.
キャー
Which is strange because I drew her for the fellas...


WELL, LUCY'S NOT THE SCREAMING TYPE...
JUDES, BABY, HOW COULD YOU NOT SEE THIS? SHE JUST SCREAMS FEMALE EMPOWERMENT!
EVEN MY EDITOR SAID:

Ashley

...CALM AND EMINENTLY CAPABLE.
HE ALWAYS LOOKS...
DUDE, YOU LOOK LIKE SOMEONE DIED. LOOSEN UP!
This one, however, just looks like an idiot.

Hello!

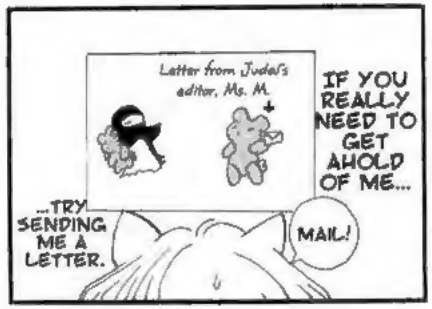
I HOPE YOU'RE JOKING!
WE SURE HAVE BEEN SEEING A LOT OF LEENE LATELY! SOME OF YOU ARE PROBABLY WONDERING IF SHE'S THE NEW STAR OF THIS SERIES!

VAMPIRE GAME

Next issue...

Lady Leene's thinking homicide. Darres and Ashley are thinking defense. Duzell is thinking life was so much simpler as a cat, and Ishtar just isn't thinking period in our next volume of Vampire Game. Leene's established a real love/hate relationship with Princess Ishtar. When she's not feeling sorry for the princess, she's plotting to kill her. And with the final poison pill, she has the ultimate murder weapon. Unaware that her life is in danger, Ishtar continues to enjoy her trip to Zi Alda, but with murder on everyone's mind, you know this little visit will turn violent. Will Ashley find the strength to stand against his wife? Will he be able to protect both the princess and Lady Sonia? Will he dump Lady Leene for a girl without issues? Castle corruption and thoughts of destruction all come to a head as the Zi Alda arc reaches its tragic, touching and more than a little warped conclusion!

Finally...



Kuroron

I don't get it...and I'm the person who drew it!

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VAMPIRE GAME™

Life in Pheliosta can be downright toxic, especially if you're friends with Lady Leene. With three very poisonous pills in her possession and thoughts of revenge on her mind, Leene is set to deliver a deadly dose of destruction to all that Princess Ishtar holds dear. There's just one problem: Leene's really not very good at vengeance, and the fact that she's actually beginning to like Ishtar certainly isn't helping matters...

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